Prayers to Care for Creation

Prayer Resources for Parishes

“As individuals, as institutions, as a people, we need a change of heart to preserve and protect the planet for our children and for generations yet unborn. (Global Climate Change: A Plea for Dialogue, Prudence and the Common Good, US Catholic Bishops, 2001)

“We also urge celebrants and liturgy committees to incorporate themes into prayer and worship that emphasize our responsibility to protect all of God’s creation and to organize prayerful celebrations of creation on feast days honoring St. Francis and St. Isidore.”

(Renewing the Earth: An Invitation to Reflection and Action on Environment in Light of Catholic Social Teaching, a Pastoral Statement of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, November 14, 1991)

Suggestions for Prayer and WorshipPrayer and Liturgy

The following resources are designed to help parishes incorporate care for God’s creation and the pursuit of environmental justice into their prayer and liturgies. Included is a general prayer service with celebrative themes, as well as services for special occasions and homiletic helps. The prayers and blessings for special occasion are taken from the *Book of Blessings and Catholic Household Blessings and Prayers*.

Prayers of Praise and Thanksgiving

Scriptural Texts

Gn 1:1-28-Creation Story
Gn 9:8-17-God's Covenant with Noah and All Creation
Ps 8-The Majesty of God
Ps 65- Thanksgiving for God's Blessings
Ps 104-Praise of God the Creator
Ps 146- Trust in God Alone
Ps 147-Zion's Grateful Praise to Her Bountiful Lord
Ps 148-Hymn of All Creation to the Almighty Creator
Dn 3:52-90-Praise of God; Praise of God's Creation
Jn 1:1-5-In the Beginning Was the Word
Rv 21:14-New Heavens and New Earth

St. Francis's Canticle of the Sun

O most High, almighty, good Lord God,
to you belong praise, glory, honor, and all blessing!

Praised be my Lord God with all creatures;
and especially our brother the sun,
which brings us the day, and the light;
fair is he, and shining with a very great splendor:
O Lord, he signifies you to us!

Praised be my Lord for our sister the moon,

and for the stars,
which God has set clear and lovely in heaven.

Praised be my Lord for our brother the wind,
and for air and cloud, calms and all weather,
by which you uphold in life all creatures.

Praised be my Lord for our sister water,
which is very serviceable to us,
and humble, and precious, and clean.

Praised be my Lord for brother fire,
through which you give us light in the darkness:
and he is bright, and pleasant, and very mighty,
and strong.

Praised be my Lord for our mother the Earth,
which sustains us and keeps us,
and yields divers fruits, and flowers of
many colors, and grass.

Praised be my Lord for all those who pardon
one another for God's love's sake,
and who endure weakness and tribulation;
blessed are they who peaceably shall endure,
for you, O most High, shall give them a crown!

Praised be my Lord for our sister,
the death of the body, from which no one escapes.
Woe to him who dies in mortal sin!
Blessed are they who are found walking by your
most holy will,
for the second death shall have no power to do
them harm.

Praise you, and bless you the Lord,
and give thanks to God, and serve God
with great humility.

(*St. Francis*, 1182-1226)

"American Catholics… are learning more, caring more, and doing more about the environment and threats to it. As a community of faith, we are also seeking to understand more clearly the ethical and religious dimensions of this challenge." (U.S. Catholic Bishops, Renewing the Earth).

Suggested Scripture Readings

Old Testament

Gn1; 2:4-7—God's Wonderful Creation Is Good
Gn 2:15—God Instructed Us to Tend Creation
Gn 9:8-17—God's Covenant with Noah and All Creation
Lv 25:23-24—The Land Is God's
Ps 8— The Majesty of God
Ps 65—Thanksgiving for God's Blessings
Ps 104—Praise of God the Creator
Ps 146—Trust in God Alone
Ps 147—Zion's Grateful Praise to Her Bountiful Lord
Ps 148—Hymn of All Creation to the Almighty Creator

New Testament

Mt 6:25-34—Learning to Trust in God as Does Nature
Jn 1:1-5—Through Him All Things Came into Being
Rom 8: 18-25—From the Beginning until Now, the
Entire Creation Has Been Groaning in
One Great Act of Waiting for Redemption
Col 1:15.23—In Chris All Things Have Their Being
Rv 21:1-5—Promise of the New Creation

Prayers of Petition

O Lord, grant us the grace to respect and care for Your creation.
Lord, hear our prayer.

O Lord, bless all of your creatures as a sign of Your wondrous love.
Lord, hear our prayer.

O Lord, help us to end the suffering of the poor and bring healing to all of your creation.
Lord, hear our prayer.

O Lord, help us to use our technological inventiveness to undo the damage we have done to Your creation and to sustain Your gift of nature.
Lord, hear our prayer.

Pledge of Commitment

To Protect and Heal God's Creation

This Pledge of Commitment may be read in unison or in alternation:

We have come to renew our covenant with God and with one another in Christ Jesus, our Lord.
We have come to help protect God's creation.

We have come as followers of Jesus to commit ourselves anew to one another and to heal injustice and poverty.

We have come to stand together against all threats to life.

We have come to discover some new beauty every day in God's creation: the sunrise and sunset, birds, flowers and trees, rainbows in the sky, the stars, the many forms of life in the forest.

We have come to listen to the "music of the universe"- water flowing over rocks, the wind, trees bending in the wind, raindrops pattering the roof.

We will remember always that God speaks to us through the beauty of his creation, and we will try our best to answer God's call to reverence all that he has created.

Hymns

One of the following may used to conclude the service:
All Creatures of Our God and King
All Things Bright and Beautiful
Come Rejoice Before Your Maker
Earth and All Stars
For the Beauty of the Earth
For the Fruits of This Creation
For the Healing of the Nations

God We Praise You
God Whose Farm Is All Creation
God Who Stretched the Spangled Heavens
Great God Our Source and Lord of Space
His Voice Is the Thunder and the Storm
How Marvelous Gods Greatness
Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee
Let All the Earth Their Voices Raise
Let All Things Now Living
Let the Heavens Be Glad
Let the Whole Creation Cry
Many and Great, O God, Are Your Works
Morning Has Broken
O God Beyond All Praising
Over the Chaos of the Empty Waters
Praise the Lord; Ye Heaven
Sing to the Lord of Harvest
Sing Out, Earth and Skies
The Works of the Lord Are Created in Wisdom
This Is My Fathers World
We Plow the Fields and Scatter

Prayers for Special Occasions

The *Book of Blessings and Catholic Household Blessings and Prayers* (available from USCCB Publishing, 1-800-235-8722) contain complete services for special occasions. These services provide an excellent opportunity to integrate worship and prayer with your daily environmental justice activities.

Days of Prayer and Celebration

(read **Prayer Services for Use on Special Occasions** for further explanation)

Rogation Days-Normally the three days before the solemnity of the Ascension
Feast of St. Francis of Assisi Feast-October 4
World Food Day-Week of October 16
Fast for World Harvest- Thursday before Thanksgiving
World Day of Peace-January 1
Earth Day- April 22
World Environment Day-Early June
Arbor Day-Varies by state

Blessings for Special Occasions from the *Book of Blessings*
-Order for the Blessing of Animals, pp. 409-416
-Order for the Blessing of Fields and Flocks, pp.417-424
-Order for the Blessing of Seeds at Planting Time, pp.425-430
-Order for the Blessing on the Occasion of Thanksgiving for the Harvest, pp. 431-436.

Prayers and Blessings for Special Occasions from Catholic Household Blessings and Prayers
-Rogation Days: Blessing of Fields and Gardens, pp. 166-170.
-Assumption Day: Blessing of Produce, pp. 170-173
-Saint Francis: Blessing of Animals, pp. 174-177.

Prayer Services for Use on Special Occasions

Rogation Days: Blessing of Fields and Gardens*
The Rogation Days were traditionally celebrated on the three days before the solemnity of the Ascension. They may now be celebrated at any time when it is appropriate to ask that gardens, fields, and orchards be blessed during the coming season. The blessing takes place in the midst

of the garden or field.

All make the sign of the cross. The leader begins:

Let us together praise the Lord,
from whom we have rain from the heavens
and abundance from the earth.
Blessed be God now and for ever.

All respond: Amen

The leader may use these or similar words to introduce the blessing:

Let us bless God, whose might has created the earth and whose providence has enriched it. God has given us the earth to cultivate, so that we may gather its fruits to sustain life. As we thank God for this bounty, let us learn also, as the Gospel teaches, to seek first God's way of holiness: then all we need will be given us besides.

Then the Scripture is read:

Listen to the words of the book of Genesis:

In the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth,…

God said, "Let the earth bring forth vegetation: every kind of plant that bears seed and every kind of fruit tree on earth that bears fruit with its seed in it." And so it happened: the earth brought forth every kind of plant that bears seed and every kind of fruit tree on earth that bears fruit with its seed in it. God saw how good it was.

God also said: "See, I give you every seed-bearing plant all over the earth and every tree that has seed-bearing fruit on it to be your food; and to all the animals of the land, all the birds of the air, and all the living creatures that crawl on the ground, I give them all the green plants for food." And so it happened. God looked at everything he had made, and he found it very good. Evening came, and morning followed—the sixth day. Genesis 1:1, 11-12, 29-31

(The family's Bible may be used for an alternate reading such as Mark 4:26-29.)

The reader concludes: This is the Word of the Lord.

All Respond: Thanks be to God.

After a time of silence, the prayers of intercession may take the form of the Litany of the Saints (page 348[Catholic Household Blessings and Prayers]). This may be chanted while processing through the garden of fields.

Then the leader prays:

O God,
from the very beginning of time
you commanded the earth to bring forth vegetation
and every fruit of every kind.
You provide the sower with seed and give bread to eat.
Grant, we pray, that this land,
enriched by your bounty and cultivated by human hands,
may be fertile with abundant crops.
Then your people, enriched by the gifts of your goodness,
will praise you unceasingly now and for all ages unending.
Grant this through Christ our Lord.
R. Amen.

All make the sign of the cross as the leader concludes:

May God, the source of every good, bless us and give success to our work, so that we may receive the joy of his gifts and praise his name now and for ever.
R. Amen.

The leader says: Let us bless the Lord.

All respond, making the sign of the cross:
Thanks be to God.

The blessing may conclude with song. The following may be sung to the tune of "All Creatures of Our God and King."

Dear mother earth, who day by day
Unfolds rich blessing on our way,
O praise God! Alleluia!
The fruits and flowers that verdant grow,
Let them his praise abundant show.
O praise God, O praise God,
Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.

St. Francis of Assisi
(Translated by William H. Draper © J. Curiven & Sons)

ASSUMPTION DAY: BLESSING OF PRODUCE*

On August 15, or another appropriate day, the produce of fields, gardens, and orchards may be blessed. Those who take part should assemble in an appropriate place around the grains, fruits, and vegetables to be blessed.

All make the sign of the cross. The leader begins:

Let us ever praise and extol God's all-embracing providence, who gives us food from the fruits of the earth. Blessed be God for ever.

All respond: Blessed be God for ever.

The leader may use these or similar words to introduce the blessing:

The Lord has bestowed the fruits of the earth for the benefit of all of the world's people. May we share with all in need and so be good stewards of God's earth and its abundance. We remember the words Mary speaks in the gospel story of the visitation: "The hungry he has filled with good things."

Then the Scripture is read:
Listen to the words of the prophet Joel:

Fear not, O land!
exult and rejoice!
for the LORD has done great things.
Fear not, beasts of the field!
for the pastures of the plain are green;
The tree bears its fruit,
the fig tree and the vine give their yield.
And do you, O children of Zion,
exult and rejoice in the LORD, your God!
He has given you the teacher of justice:
He has made the rain come down for you,
the early and the late rain as before.
The threshing floors shall be full of grain
and the vats shall overflow with wine and oil.
You shall eat and be filled,
and shall praise the name of the LORD, your God,
Because he has dealt wondrously with you….

Joel 2:21-24, 26

(The family's Bible may be used for an alternate reading such as Deuteronomy 28:1-6.)

The reader concludes: This is the Word of the Lord.

All respond: Thanks be to God.

OTHER PRAYERS FOR ANIMALS*

O Heavenly Father,
protect and bless all things that have breath.
Guard them from all evil,
and let them sleep in peace.

Albert Schweitzer

Hear our humble prayer, O God,
for our friends the animals, your creatures.
We pray especially for all that are suffering in any way:
for the overworked and underfed,
the hunted, lost, or hungry;
for all in captivity or ill-treated,
and for those that must be put to death.
For those who deal with them,
we ask a gentle heart of compassion,
gentle hands, and kindly words.
Make us all true friends to animals
and worthy followers of our merciful Savior, Jesus Christ.
R. Amen.

BLESSING FOR THE PRODUCTS OF NATURE*

Blessed are you, O God,
Creator of the universe,
who have made all things good
and given the earth for us to cultivate.
Grant that we may always use created things gratefully
and share your gift with those in need,
out of the love of Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you for ever and ever.
R. Amen

BLESSING FOR THE PRODUCTS OF HUMAN LABOR*

Almighty and ever-living God,
you have made us stewards over the created world,
so that in all things we might honor the demands of charity.
Graciously hear our prayers,
that your blessing may come upon all those
who use these objects for their needs.
Let them always see you as the good surpassing every good
and love their neighbor with upright hearts.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.
R. Amen